



TenStep Supplemental Paper

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Cross Cultural Communication

Encountering new and different people can be interesting, stimulating and exciting. However, it can also be stressful, confusing, and frustrating when you do not understand where they are coming from, what they are trying to communicate and why they do what they do.

Organizations today are increasingly made up of people from various cultures and sub-cultures. "Culture" refers to a group or community that shares common experiences. It includes groups that people are born into, such as gender, race, or national origin. It also includes groups that people join or become part of. For example, people acquire a new culture by moving to a new region, by a change in economic status, or even by becoming disabled.

If an organization actively looks for cultural diversity when it recruits, it will maximize its recruitment base and therefore be more likely to find the best candidate.

Different work styles and communication styles can complement a workplace culture. A workplace culture that supports and promotes diversity will work better than one that attempts to clone its employees into a one-dimensional stereotype of the organization's image. This involves reappraising many traditional notions of workplace culture. Communication is the single most important factor to enable such cross-cultural organizations to function effectively.

The acquisition of cross-cultural communication abilities passes through four phases: awareness, recognition, knowledge and skills.

Step 1 - Awareness

Awareness is where it all starts. This process requires people to learn more about each other's cultures through an unbiased and unprejudiced attempt to understand others.

Step 2 - Recognition

Recognizing your own ethnocentricity - the ways in which you stereotype, judge and discriminate (your emotional reactions to conflicting cultural values) is vital.

Step 3 - Knowledge

Developing an intellectual grasp of the basics of a new culture is essential. Learning about other cultures that you encounter in the workplace also enables you to appreciate the contributions made by people from diverse cultures at work

Step 4 - Skills

Skills are based on awareness, recognition and knowledge, along with practice. Recognize and apply the symbols of other cultures - recognize their heroes, practice their rituals, and experience the satisfaction of getting along in the new environment.



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Organizations are dynamic, and they are changing more rapidly every day. They are becoming diverse, technical, global, and at the same time more dependant than ever on productive working relationships. Thus, success in organizations depends more and more on building cross-cultural communication skills.